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Cover: Adult male *Agama lebretoni* in Angondjé, Libreville, Estuaire Province, northwestern Gabon. Photograph by Laurent Chirio.

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Miscellanea Herpetologica Gabonica IV

Olivier S. G. Pauwels¹, Piero Carlino², Laurent Chirio³ and Jean-Louis Albert⁴

This contribution is dedicated to the French veterinarian Bettina Sallé, who tragically died of malaria in Libreville in April 2013. She was an extraordinary woman who dedicated her life to the study and conservation of primates. Bettina co-authored the MHG III and posthumously contributed to the present MHG IV.

Abstract

We report the first observation of *Lygodactylus conraui* (Gekkonidae) in Gabon. We present new Gabonese locality records for *Kinixys erosa* (Testudinidae), *Agama agama* and *A. lebretoni* (Agamidae), *Trachylepis albilabris* (Scincidae), *Chamaeleo cristatus* and *C. owenii* (Chamaeleonidae), *Dasypeltis fasciata*, *Hapsidophrys smaragdinus*, *Rhamnophis a. aethiopissa* (Colubridae), *Aparallactus modestus*, *Gonionotophis poensis*, *Lamprophis olivaceus*, *Polemon fulvicollis* (Lamprophiidae) and *Afrotyphlops congestus* (Typhlopidae). Four snake and two lizard species are newly recorded from Ogooué-Lolo and Estuaire provinces, respectively. We refer all published records of *Agama paragama*, *A. cf. paragama* and *A. sylvana* from Gabon to *A. lebretoni*.

Keywords

Biodiversity, herpetofauna, Squamata, protected areas, conservation, Gabon, Equatorial Africa.

Introduction

Since the publication of a synthesis on the herpetofauna of Gabon a few years ago (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008), which showed that many more species should be found in the country based on their global distribution, and that the species' ecology and geographical distribution within the country were poorly studied, very little progress has been made. We hence decided to pursue the publication of the series *Miscellanea Herpetologica Gabonica*, in order to keep track and increase the development of the knowledge on the reptiles of Gabon. Hopefully this series, whose third and latest volume was published by Pauwels and Sallé in 2009, will motivate persons who made interesting observations and photographs in the field or who are aware of unpublished museum material which could help to better understand the species' distributions, to share their data and hence eventually contribute to a better understanding of the ecology, diversity and conservation status of the reptiles of Gabon.

Material and Methods

New reptile material under study is housed in the Natural History Museum of Salento in Calimera, Italy. Collected specimens were injected with 90% ethanol then preserved in 70% ethanol. Snake ventral scales were counted according to the method of Dowling (1951). Snake dorsal scale rows were counted at one head length behind head, at midbody (above the ventral corresponding to half of the total number of ventrals), and at one head length before vent; subcaudal counts exclude the terminal pointed scale. The sex of preserved snakes was determined by dissection of the tail base. Specimens' main

diagnostic morphological characters are provided in Table 1 and within the species accounts. We examined all available literature on the reptiles of Gabon (see Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008; Pauwels et al., 2011; Pauwels and Kok, 2013; Carlino and Pauwels, 2014, 2015, and references therein).

Abbreviations: **Institutions:** CENAREST, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique, Libreville, Gabon; MSNS, Natural History Museum of Salento, Calimera, Italy; ZFMK, Zoologisches Forschungsmuseum A. Koenig, Bonn, Germany. **Morphology:** A = anal scale; AT = anterior temporals; D = divided; DSR = number of dorsal scale rows; F = female; IL = number of infralabials, followed in brackets by the number of IL in contact with the first pair of sublinguals; K = keeled; M = male; PoO = number of postoculars; PreO = number of preoculars; PV = number of prefrontals; S = single; SC = number of subcaudals; SL = supralabials, followed in brackets by the SL in contact with orbit; SVL = snout-vent length; TaL = tail length; U = unkeeled; VEN = number of ventrals. Varia: Dept = Department; Prov. = Province.

Results

Testudines

Testudinidae

Kinixys erosa (Schweigger, 1812)

A subadult female was photographed by one of us (JLA) at 10 km south of Akiéni, Lékon-Lékori Dept, Haut-Ogooué Prov. (Figure 1) on 25 Feb. 2015. The turtle was crossing the road at around 9:30 A.M. in a secondary forest area. New dept record (Maran and Pauwels, 2005).

1. corresponding author: Département des Vertébrés Récents, Institut Royal des Sciences naturelles de Belgique, Rue Vautier 29, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium. osgpauwels@yahoo.fr

2. Museo di Storia naturale del Salento, Sp. Calimera-Borgagne km 1, 73021 Calimera, Italy. piero.carlino@msns.it

3. Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, 25 rue Cuvier, CP 30 (Reptiles), 75005 Paris, France. lchirio@hotmail.com

4. BP 197, Potos, Franceville, Gabon jlalbert@mac.com



Figure 1. Live subadult *Kinixys erosa* in Lékon-Lékori Department, Haut-Ogooué Province, southeastern Gabon. Photograph by J.-L. Albert.

Squamata

Agamidae

Agama lebretoni Wagner, Barej & Schmitz, 2009

In their description of the species, Wagner et al. (2009a) listed specimens from Gabon in their material examined, reported on their distribution map: ZFMK 73239-245 from “Fougamou” and IRSNB 15686-687 from “Ngouassa.” Fougamou is located in Tsamba-Magotsi Dept, Ngounié Prov. Wagner et al. (2009a) ignored the work of Pauwels et al. (2002) where the specimens IRSNB 15686-687 were listed under *A. cf. paragama*. Although IRSNB 15686 indeed originates from Ngouassa, Offoué-Onoy Dept, Ogooué-Lolo Prov., IRSNB 15687 was collected by one of us (OSGP) in Gongué, another locality in the same department. Pauwels et al. (2002) mentioned that this species was different both from *A. agama* and *A. paragama*, and also listed it, based on visual observations by OSGP, from Boussimbi, Diangui, Mandji and Sogha in the same department. The *Agama* “*sylvana*” populations from Ogooué-Ivindo and Ogooué-Lolo provinces mentioned by Pauwels and Vande weghe (2008) have to be referred to *A. lebretoni*. We also refer here the *A.* “*sylvana*” individuals from Ekouyi (Plateaux Dept, Haut-Ogooué Prov.) and Wagny (Mouloundou Dept, Ogooué-Lolo Prov.) illustrated by Pauwels and Vande weghe (2008) as *A. lebretoni*. An adult male *A. lebretoni* was photographed by one of us (JLA) on 13 September 2014 at the foot of a building in France-

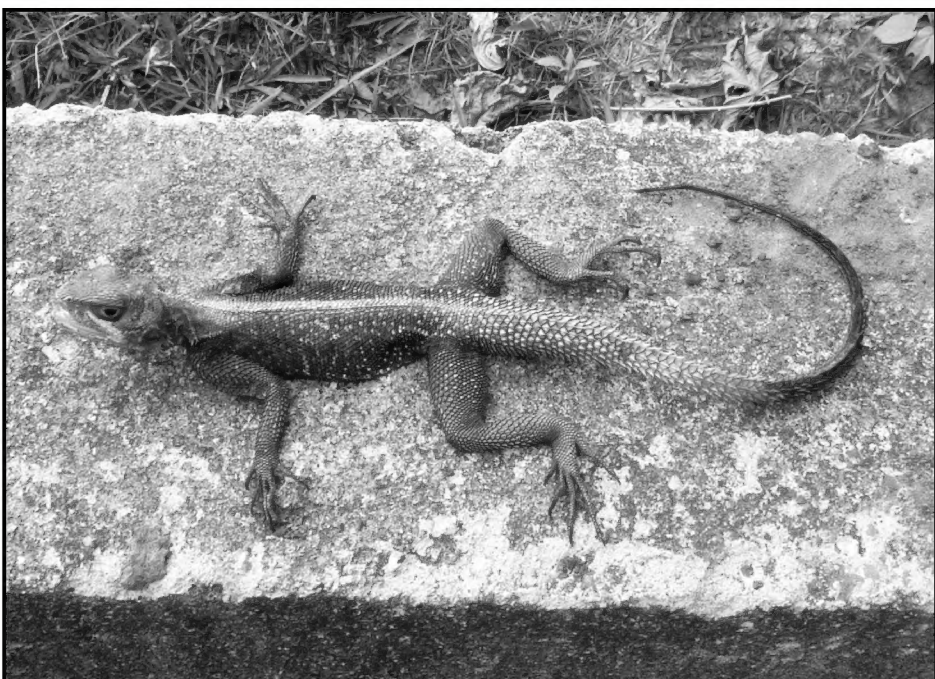


Figure 3. Live adult male *Agama lebretoni* in Angondjé, Libreville, Estuaire Province, northwestern Gabon. Photograph by L. Chirio.



Figure 2. Live adult male *Agama lebretoni* in Franceville, Haut-Ogooué Province, southeastern Gabon. Photograph by J.-L. Albert.

ville, Passa Dept, Haut-Ogooué Prov. (Figure 2). Based on its coloration, we maintain the identification of an adult male *Agama* from Franceville illustrated by Pauwels et al. (2007) as *A. agama*. One of us (LC) observed two adult males and one female in Angondjé, Libreville, Estuaire Prov., on 13 July 2013 (Figure 3), one adult female at Malibé 2 (0°35'22.34"N, 9°24'08.06"E), commune d'Akanda, Estuaire Prov., on 11 Oct. 2013 (Figure 4) and one adult male and one adult female at SIAT-Gabon in Bitam, Ntem Dpt, Woleu-Ntem Prov., on 19 July 2013. In Angondjé *A. lebretoni* is found in the mangrove and its direct surroundings, while *A. agama* is found in gardens and on house walls. These observations represent new records



Figure 4. Live adult female *Agama lebretoni* found at night asleep on a branch in Malibé 2, Estuaire Province, northwestern Gabon. Photograph by L. Chirio.



Figure 5. Live adult female *Chamaeleo owenii* in Akiéni, Haut-Ogooué Province, southeastern Gabon. Photograph by B. Sallé.

for both provinces. *Agama lebretoni* has thus been observed in Gabon at elevations varying from sea level to 650 masl. *Agama agama* and *A. lebretoni* thus co-exist in Haut-Ogooué Prov., as already stressed by Pauwels and Vande weghe (2008), and in Angondjé, although they are not found in strict syntopy.

Chamaeleonidae

Chamaeleo cristatus Stutchbury, 1837

Morin et al. (2014) showed a photo of an unidentified chameleon from an unspecified locality, taken by Q. Meunier. The chameleon shows a high dorsal “sail,” a high casque with blue spots on its lateral crests, no gular crest, no ventral crest, no horns, and can be unambiguously identified as an adult male *C. cristatus*. Its photographer informed OSGP that it was found at Hendjé (0°16'06.8"N, 13°23'23.0"E), 90 km E-SE of Makokou, Ivindo Dept, Ogooué-Ivindo Prov. New locality record.

Chamaeleo owenii Gray, 1831

An adult female from Akiéni (1°11'S, 13°53'E), Lékoni-Lékori Dept, Haut-Ogooué Prov., was photographed (Figure 5) in Apr. 2010 by Bettina Sallé. New dept record. In this province it was so far recorded only from Franceville in Passa Dept (Pauwels et al., 2007).

Gekkonidae

Lygodactylus conraui Tornier, 1902

On 26 Feb. 2012 an adult individual was observed and collected by the mammalogist Rosalie Ngoua on a rubbish pile along a trail in Mondah Forest, Komo-Mondah Dept, Estuaire Prov. The specimen (Chirio's collection number 9363) was caught and examined by one of us (LC) while it was alive; it was subsequently preserved in ethanol and sent to J.-F. Trape for DNA analysis. Alive it displayed the highly distinctive bright green color of *L. conraui*. The species is well known from southern Cameroon (Chirio and LeBreton, 2007) and its presence in northwestern Gabon was thus highly expectable. Pauwels and Vande weghe (2008) did not include it in their revised list of the reptiles of Gabon, and we thus present it here as a new country record.

Scincidae

Trachylepis albilabris (Hallowell, 1857)

A dead adult individual was photographed on 22 Sept. 2013 by



Figure 6. Freshly dead adult *Trachylepis albilabris* in Franceville, Haut-Ogooué Province, southeastern Gabon. Photograph by J.-L. Albert.

one of us (JLA) at the foot of a building in Franceville, Passa Dept, Haut-Ogooué Prov. (Figure 6). The individual showed a large transparent disk on the lower eyelid, three keels per dorsal scale, 8/8 SL, 4/4 supraoculars, a single scale between the last supraocular and the anterior supratemporal, prefrontals in contact, supranasals not in contact, and a whitish throat and belly. New province record (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008).

Colubridae

Dasypeltis fasciata Smith, 1849

MSNS Rept 111: near Koulamoutou airport (1°11'12"S, 12°25'44"E), Lolo-Bouenguidi Dept, Ogooué-Lolo Prov., 19 Nov. 2012. It was found at 7:30 P.M. near a fallen tree. New province record for the genus (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008).

Hapsidophrys smaragdinus (Schlegel, 1837)

MSNS Rept 115: near Boussimbi (1°12'02"S, 11°48'57"E), Offoué-Onoy Dept, Ogooué-Lolo Prov., 21 Nov. 2012. It was caught while crossing the road at 11:15 A.M.; it was very aggressive when handled. New locality record (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008).

Rhamnophis aethiopissa aethiopissa Günther, 1862

MSNS Rept 116: near Koulamoutou, Lolo-Bouenguidi Dept, Ogooué-Lolo Prov., 27 Nov. 2012. Found freshly dead on road at 5:00 P.M. New dept record (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008).

Lamprophiidae

Aparallactus modestus (Günther, 1859)

MSNS Rept 112: between Boussimbi and Mount Iboundji (1°11'49"S, 11°49'10"E), Offoué-Onoy Dept, Ogooué-Lolo Prov., 22 Nov. 2012. Found at midday in the leaf litter in secondary forest. New province record (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008).

Gonionotophis poensis (Smith, 1847)

MSNS Rept 117: near Boussimbi (1°07'45"S, 11°50'08"E; alt. 382 masl), Offoué-Onoy Dept, Ogooué-Lolo Prov., 22 Nov. 2012. Caught at 11:30 A.M. among the vegetation on a boulder surrounded by the water of a forest stream. New province record (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008).

Lamprophis olivaceus (Duméril, 1856)

MSNS Rept 114: near Iboundji city (1°13'34"S, 11°50'43"E), Offoué-Onoy Dept, Ogooué-Lolo Prov., 20 Nov. 2012. Found



Figure 7. Preserved *Polemon fulvicollis* from Boussimbi, Ogooué-Lolo Province, central Gabon. Photograph by P. Carlini.

alive on the roadside at 8:00 P.M. New locality record (Blanc and Frétey, 2000).

Polemon fulvicollis (Mocquard, 1887)

MSNS Rept 110: Boussimbi, Offoué-Onoy Dept, Ogooué-Lolo Prov., 24 Nov. 2012 (Figure 7). Found in the afternoon, freshly killed with a stick by a villager near the village chief hut. New province record for the genus (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008).

Typhlopidae

Afrotyphlops congestus (Duméril & Bibron, 1844)

MSNS Rept 109: an adult male (SVL 420 mm, TaL 12 mm, DSR 30 around midbody) found dead on road at 10:00 A.M. between Koulamoutou and Roungassa (1°00' 32"S, 12°32'34"E), Lolo-Bouenguide Dept, Ogooué-Lolo Prov., on 19 Nov. 2012. The specimen, in poor condition, was probably killed by a car during the preceding night. New dept record (Pauwels and Vande weghe, 2008).

In addition to our new material presented above, recent literature on Gabon added new localities and data for various species. Shirley et al. (2014) examined and sampled long-snout crocodiles from Akaka, Dji Dji River, and a few unprecise localities, and claimed they belong to a species distinct from *Mecistops cataphractus*, the latter they said being not represented in Gabon. A number of popular articles related the discovery of an underground population of *Osteolaemus tetraspis* in Abanda caves, Étimboué Dept, Ogooué-Maritime Prov. (see, among others, Testa et al., 2011). These articles claimed that the cave-dwelling crocodiles genetically and morphologically differed from surrounding populations, as echoed by other researchers (Somaweera et al., 2014), but this was so far never evidenced; the only available molecular work involving these specimens (Shirley, 2013) did not show them to deserve a distinct taxonomic status. Delsinne et al. (2015) reported dietary observations on *Agama agama* in Pongara and Minkébé national parks. Bates et al. (2013) mentioned *Gerrhosaurus nigrolineatus* (Gerrhosauridae), based on museum-preserved vouchers, from Pointe Denis, Estuaire Prov., and from Loango National Park, Gamba area and Rabi in Ogooué-Maritime Prov. Billand (2012:66) showed the photograph of a monitor identified as a “Varan du Nil (*Varanus niloticus*),” without locality, taken by G. Dubois. Its four yellow bands between limb insertions allow us to re-identify it with certainty as a *V. ornatus*; it was photographed in Loango National Park (G. Dubois, pers. comm. to OSGP), from where the species is already well known

(Pauwels et al., 2004). We confirm that the photograph of a live python from Loango National Park presented in van Vliet et al. (2012) is of *Python sebae* (Pythonidae). In a phylogeographic study on West African *Agama* populations, Vasconcelos et al. (2014) used an *Agama agama* sample (ZFMK 73185) from “Barrage de Tchimbélé” (locality details provided in the online supplementary material). Leaché and Fujita (2010), in a genetic study on *Hemidactylus fasciatus*, showed a dot on southwestern Gabon on a map illustrating the geographic location of samples used for their study, without any additional detail on that sample. Wagner et al. (2014), in a superficial revision of *Hemidactylus fasciatus*, described *H. coalescens*, said to occur in southern Cameroon, Gabon and Congo. They listed two non-type ZFMK specimens from Gabon in their examined material: one from “Mokabane,” the other from “Kama River,” without more locality details. Carlini and Pauwels (2015) regarded *H. coalescens* as a synonym of *H. fasciatus*. Testa and Oslisly (2013) illustrated an adult male *Boiga blandingii* from Pahon 1 cave near Lastoursville, Ogooué-Lolo Prov. Jesus et al. (2009), in a phylogenetic study of *Philothamnus* and *Hapsidophrys*, used specimens of *Hapsidophrys smaragdinus* and *Philothamnus nitidus* from Rabi and *Philothamnus carinatus* from Loango National Park, Ogooué-Maritime Prov.; these specimens were actually collected by Pauwels et al. (2004, 2006) who provided their exact localities of origin. Motsch et al. (2015) reported observations of *Python sebae* and *Bitis gabonica* in enclosures of semi-free-ranging Sun-tailed monkeys *Cercopithecus solatus* (Cercopithecidae); although the localities of these observations were not reported within the publication they took place in a secondary forest in Franceville, Haut-Ogooué Prov. (P. Motsch, pers. comm. to OSGP, Nov. 2015). Mibambani et al. (2009) described an interaction between a *Causus maculatus* and Senegal Lapwings *Vanellus lugubris* in the savanna of the northern part of Lopé National Park, thus in Lopé Dept, Ogooué-Ivindo Prov. Dvořáková et al. (2014, 2015) listed a haemogregarine, *Haemogregarina* sp., from *Pelusios marani* from Gabon without more precision; the *Pelusios* actually originated from “Mouri-matsengui, 5 km from Yombi II” (N. Dvořáková, pers. comm. to OSGP), thus in Ngounié Prov. The *Haemogregarina* sample originates from a series of *P. marani* collected in that locality and cited by Fritz et al. (2012).

Discussion

Pauwels and Vande weghe (2008) documented 122 reptile species for Gabon. The recent additions of *Hemidactylus echinus* (Gekkonidae) by Carlini and Pauwels (2015), *Ichnotropis bivittata* (Lacertidae) by Ineich and Le Garff (2015), *Lepidothyris f. fernandi* (Scincidae) by Wagner et al. (2009b), *Monopeltis schoutedeni* (Amphisbaenidae) by Pauwels et al. (2010) and of *Thrasops jacksonii* (Colubridae) by Carlini and Pauwels (2013) and the present confirmation of *Lygodactylus conraui* for Gabon bring to 128 the reptile species number for the country. In order to further increase the list of Gabon reptiles, future surveys should focus on northeastern and southeastern Gabon, to add forest and savanna species, respectively. There is indeed no reason to believe that a number of sylvicolous species known from southern Cameroon and savanna species known from the Republic of Congo would not also

Table 1. Diagnostic morphometric and meristic data for colubrid and lamprophiid snake vouchers. For the abbreviations, see Materials and Methods.

Species & catalog number	Sex	SVL (mm)	TaL (mm)	DSR	PV + VEN	A	SC	SL	IL	Lor	PreO	PoO	AT
Colubridae													
<i>Dasypeltis fasciata</i>													
MSNS Rept 111	M	280	65	19-19-17, K	2 + 241, U	S	87, D, U	7 (3-4) / 7 (3-4)	7 (3) / 8 (3)	0 / 0	1 / 1	2 / 2	3 / 2
<i>Hapsidophrys smaragdinus</i>													
MSNS Rept 115	F	440	285	15-15-11, K	1 + 160, K	D	146, D, K	9 (5-6) / 9 (5-6)	10 (5) / 10 (5)	1 / 1	1 / 1	2 / 2	1 / 1
<i>Rhamnophis a. aethiopissa</i>													
MSNS Rept 116	M	890	450	17-17-15, U	1 + 165, K	D	141, D, K	7 (4-5) / 8 (4-5)	8 (4) / 8 (4)	1 / 1	1 / 1	2 / 2	1 / 1
Lamprophiidae													
<i>Aparallactus modestus</i>													
MSNS Rept 112	M	150	25	15-15-15, U	2 + 151, U	S	39, S, U	7 (3-4) / 7 (3-4)	7 (4) / 7 (3)	0 / 0	1 / 1	2 / 2	0 / 0
<i>Gonionotophis poensis</i>													
MSNS Rept 117	M	660	214	17-15-15, K	2 + 244, K	S	101, D, K	7 (3-4) / 7 (3-4)	8 (5) / 8 (5)	1 / 1	1 / 1	2 / 2	1 / 1
<i>Lamprophis olivaceus</i>													
MSNS Rept 114	F	670	90	27-27-24, U	1 + 206, U	S	39, S, U	8 (3-5) / 8 (4-6)	9 (4) / 9 (4)	1 / 1	1 / 2	2 / 2	1 / 1
<i>Polemon fulvicollis</i>													
MSNS Rept 110	F	410	18	15-15-15, U	2 + 234, U	D	16, D, U	7 (3-4) / 7 (3-4)	7 (4) / 7 (4)	0 / 0	1 / 1	2 / 2	1 / 1

occur in the neighboring parts of Gabon, as demonstrated by the most recent additions to the country's herpetofauna.

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Note on a Hibernaculum Used by *Lithobates palustris* in Pennsylvania

Sean M. Hartzell

Department of Biological & Allied Health Sciences

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania

400 E. Second St.

Bloomsburg, PA 17815

smh14844@huskies.bloomu.edu

Pickerel Frogs (*Lithobates palustris*) are medium-sized anurans found throughout much of the eastern United States and southeastern Canada (Dodd, 2013). They have been reported to hibernate within mud on the bottom of ponds, in ravines, within spring seeps and pools (typically underneath mud, rocks, or debris, and within or around caves (Redmer, 2005; Dodd, 2013). However, few observations appear to be available regarding hibernacula used by *L. palustris* within the northeastern United States, especially Pennsylvania (Hulse et al., 2001).

On 7 March 2016 I observed a small (approximately 4 cm snout-to-urostyle length) *L. palustris* submerged in water beneath a sheet of ice covering a small spring near Bloomsburg, Columbia County, Pennsylvania, USA (41.0037°N 76.4550°W [WGS 84]). As the surface of this spring was frozen over during

several previous visits to the area in January and February 2016, it seems very likely that the frog overwintered in this locality. While this observation is not unexpected considering *L. palustris* has been previously reported to hibernate within springs (Redmer, 2005; Dodd, 2013), it helps to fill an apparent gap within the literature for hibernacula used by *L. palustris* in Pennsylvania. Hulse et al. (2001) remark “it is not known whether pickerel frogs hibernate in terrestrial habitats or in aquatic situations.” The observation reported here suggests that at least some *L. palustris* within Pennsylvania hibernate in aquatic situations.

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Confessions of a Teenaged Herp Geek

Roger A. Repp

National Optical Astronomy Observatory

repp@noao.edu

(Dedicated to the mothers of herpetologists worldwide)

In the April 2016 issue of the *Bulletin of the Chicago Herpetological Society*, this author had these words to say about the formation of the CHS:

The CHS was an early riser compared to the explosive wave of herpetoculturists that followed over two decades later. Rules and regulations regarding collecting, bartering and selling amphibians and reptiles were nearly nonexistent. Our perceptions of what was or wasn't acceptable behavior have changed as radically as comparing the world's first telegraph to today's iPhones. Fifty years ago, herpetology in general, and the CHS specifically, could be compared to the Wild West. Some of what follows in this and future articles may be shocking to you. While I sure can't say that it wasn't one hell of a good time, I can also say with assurance that both herpetology and the CHS have evolved into better things. It was a learning process for all of us, and we must not lose sight of the fact that this is being reported from the perspective of a wide-eyed 12-year-old boy.

This article will be difficult for me in the beginning, but I imagine that once it starts rolling, it will be a blast. The key words in the paragraph above are "have evolved into better things." While that might not be true for everybody in the herpetological sense, it certainly was for me. There was a time when I couldn't leave a snake on the ground. As soon as I saw it, it was snagged, bagged and sentenced to a lifetime of captivity. My sole reason for entering nature's loving embrace was to take something from her, and hopefully, profit from it. I say this to my shame.

In retrospect, it has been over 20 years since I last collected anything from the wild, and that one (a Glossysnake) was for educational purposes. It has been over 40 years since I removed anything from nature with selling or trading it in mind. The last snake that I will ever keep died last year. It's not that I'm on a crusade to stop this sort of thing. I've just personally lost all interest in doing any of it. My only remaining passion with herps is to just go out and meet them on their own terms. All of my herp pets are now kept in a terrarium the size of planet Earth.

Obviously, the CHS did not evolve in exactly the same fashion, but it *did* evolve tremendously from those Wild West days 50 years ago. Initially, the meetings were an absolute herpetological flea market, with all manner of herps being offered for sale. Several years later, the CHS got wise to the changing paradigms and perceptions surrounding the relationship of the science end of herpetology to the herpetocultural aspect. Which image did the CHS want to project? A serious, science-based organization, or a geek show? I was squarely on the geek show side of the equation at the time. When they banned the public display of sale animals at the meetings, I dropped out for a long time. Many others did the same. But in retrospect, as unpopular as the decision was at the time, it was the right thing to do. And now we can rock!

I was an ugly kid. I had absolutely nothing going for me that would make me popular with the young ladies. To quote Rodney Dangerfield, "I was so ugly that my parents tied a pork chop

around my neck so that the dog would play with me." But put a big Tegu in my hands, and we are not talking about dogs any more. All the cool people flocked around me, and many times cutie pies who normally wouldn't give me the time of day cottoned up in manner oh so sweetly. Over time, in essence, herps became my escape from being nothing special to becoming the center of attention. They became my identity, but *not* my alter ego. I think like many others reading these words, I came out of my mother's womb predestined to love herps. There is bad gene, and we have all have it. I've read in many places that the reason so many people fear and loathe snakes is because they learned this fear from their parents. At least in my case, nothing could be further from the truth. My first encounter with a wild snake was when I was four years old. My mother was working in her garden, and came across a Gartersnake. Her shrieks of terror brought me a running. When I saw that snake slithering through the lettuce, I ran around her to grab it. But my older brother Bob was quicker, and got to it first. He handed it to me, and my love of this snake promptly overruled the major freak-out that ma was displaying. Yup! The bad gene. You got it, I got it, and why is it that I'm feeling the breeze of nodding heads all the way in Arizona?

My neighborhood in Crystal Lake, Illinois, lined a street that was basically a circular loop, and it was poised on the outskirts of town. To the north and east, there was nothing but fields, woods, ponds, creeks and rivers. To the west and south was the town itself. I was born and raised in the era just before the birth control pill. Hence, the penalty for prolonged sex was severe, and many lifetime mistakes of passion became my playmates. There were at least 20 kids within a year of my age on that loop, and it was common for families to have five or more children. Baseball games with nine on a side were formed at the drop of a hat, and mischief could develop even quicker.

To varying degrees, most of the boys in the neighborhood all liked the local snakes and turtles. We often immersed ourselves in the woods and fields seeking them together. When I came back from my very first CHS meeting, there was no small amount of interest generated. For the next several meetings, the Crystal Lake contingency was well represented. Through time, five stalwarts began to go with regularity. They were Dale Rover, Jack Butcher, Dave Barker, Mike Harlan and me. Our mode of getting to the meetings was usually ride the Chicago and Northwestern train in, catch a cab to the Chicago Academy of Sciences at 2001 N. Clark Street, and repeat the process to get home at the end of it all. We smuggled some very interesting packages there and back, the favored method being stuffing them inside our coats for the ride.

Before launching into some of the deeds and misdeeds performed by us teenage herp geeks, it might be interesting to discuss the mindset of the "adults" around us. At one of the

early meetings, a member of the CHS stood before the crowd, and bragged about collecting six massasaugas from a forest preserve near the Des Plaines River. One member of the audience was outraged at this, and stood up and spoke his mind about the perils of overcollecting a herp as rare as this. The protester was told to shut up and sit down by more than one person. I would wager massasaugas are all extirpated from the area now. I'm not blaming anybody for that. They were likely doomed anyhow. But we *can* say with certainty that any collecting done didn't do them any favors. What I can't fathom is why the Crystal Lake lads didn't catch the next train to Wheeling to go find some ourselves. I would venture a guess that other members did.

Memories of the herps that I purchased at the meetings, along with the eventual outcome of each, are murky. It is difficult to remember exactly in a chronological order what I bought, and when I bought it. My earliest recollection of buying a snake at one of the meetings was of a powerful, large, lanky and ill-tempered Yellow Ratsnake. It was easily six feet long, slender of build, but extremely strong, wiry and powerful. The first time I held it, it sort of got away from me, and a four-foot length of snake suspended nearly straight out of my hands. The smart end of that snake opened his snappers into a menacing gape. People were walking right past me, oblivious to the fact that there was large snake about to lay a painful hickey on them. As they passed by, the snake would follow their movements, and lunge at them. Luckily, it did not connect with anybody. I had completely lost control of the snake, and began boisterously warning people around me. The head on this rascal was so large that I was fearful of reeling it back in. Help came from an unlikely source. It was Esther Lewis who saved the night. She calmed that snake down with lots of sweet talking and love. She stroked it while soothing it with kind words, kissed it on the head, and bundled it back up in my hands. The snake remained well-behaved for the rest of the meeting. Perhaps it knew that if it acted out again, Esther would come along a lay another sloppy one on him.

Later that night, at the train station, I pulled the bagged snake out from my jacket, and put it on the chair beside me. My new ratsnake did not like being confined in the bag, and made all manner of attempts to get out of it. Hence, the cloth sack containing the lanky brute would rise three feet out of the chair, and then move off to one side or the other as the snake continuously probed for an escape route. It was quite the spectacle. A sweet elderly lady sat in the chair beside the writhing sack. As she stared at that constantly shifting sacked snake, she maintained a serene poker face, peacefully licking and munching an ice cream cone until it was gone. Then, she got up and walked away — without saying a word to me or anybody else. Apparently, sweet and elderly ladies survive the mean streets of Chicago by not asking any questions.

Two other snakes soon entered my collection. The first was a handsome five-foot-long female Eastern Indigo Snake, that was purchased for a price of seven dollars. Seven bucks for an indigo? Not bad! Even I might be tempted to buy another for that price. The second was a bright orange Mangrove Watersnake, which was a stunning beauty that was pushing two feet long. I paid ten bucks for this snake. Not long after buying both snakes,

I decided to take them to the local pet store to show them off to Karen, who was a gorgeous maiden who worked there and also happened to like snakes. I placed both snakes in a large cloth sack, and peddled the mile or so on my bicycle to the pet store. Upon opening the top of the sack so that we could both peek in, we were rewarded with the sight of the tip of an orange tail disappearing down the gullet of the indigo. Karen was not impressed!

My father hardly ever discussed snakes with me. I knew better than to even bring them up. But when he heard the story of the indigo choking down that ten-dollar watersnake, he thought that was uproariously funny. Our family's favorite upscale dining establishment at the time was a place called Lenny's. In between gales of laughter, dad informed me that I could have bought the most extravagant meal there for my snake for less than ten bucks. Roughly 20 years later, when dad was dying of cancer, we interviewed him and caught it all on tape. He was asked to remember one thing from each of his five children. When it came to me, guess what he brought up? You got it, the indigo eating that ten-dollar watersnake. And even though he was suffering and in great pain, he once again laughed about it until tears rolled down his eyes. The actual event was really not that amusing. It is only worth reporting because *Dad* thought it was that funny.

At one of the early meetings of the CHS, I met the Devil himself. I'd heard about him, but I never dreamed that he'd have blue eyes and blue jeans. Anyway, regardless of eye color and manner of dress, the Devil had a great big cooler beside him. He says to me as I wander past, "P-s-s-t, hey kid! Please allow me to introduce myself. I'm a man of wealth and taste." He continued on by blubbering about killing tsars and their ministers, riding tanks at a general's rank, while blitzkriegs raged and bodies stank. He seemed awful young to have been through so much. I would have guessed him as being at most two years older than me. Perhaps the climate in Hades is conducive to maintaining a youthful appearance? Normally, I would walk away from this kind of nutcase, but being somewhat of a bullshitter myself, it was great to kick back and listen to a *real* professional. But he did grow tiresome, and I lost all interest, until he leaned forward and whispered in my ear "You wanna buy a cheap alligator?" *Now* he had me!

He raised the lid to the cooler, inside of which were all manner of young American Alligators, ranging in size from ten inch long hatchlings to a four footer, which was kept in a separate bag. This done no doubt so that it wouldn't eat its way into any would-be profit margin. Oh boy, you bet I wanted to buy a cheap alligator! And I wanted the big one! But just as I was about to hand my soul to the Devil himself as payment, the sergeant-at-arms of the CHS sauntered up to us, and busted him. Immediately, the goon squad of the CHS surrounded us, and told that Devil to shut that cooler, that alligators were endangered species, and their sale would not be allowed at any CHS meeting. "Curses! Foiled again!" said the Devil, and he irritably slammed his cooler shut and sauntered off into the night with it, tripping over his barbed tail on his way out the door. At the end of the meeting, when I egressed into the night air, the Devil met me again, and handed me the sack with the biggest alligator in it

and hissed “Keep it, it’s yours.” When I offered him my soul, he informed me that it was worthless, and I could keep that too. While there was no hot surge of joy running up and down my backbone over possessing a worthless soul, the contents of the hefty squirming sack now in my hands reminded me that life was good. Oh boy! I had myself a *dandy* of an alligator. I could hardly wait to show my prize to all the cutie pies at school. But first, I had to get it home. Even though I always wore an oversized jacket to the CHS meetings for just such a purpose, when I stuffed that gator inside, I bore a striking resemblance to a vagrant leaving a K-mart after a five-finger discount shopping spree. But miraculously, throughout the cab ride to the train station and the subsequent train ride home, nobody asked any questions.

When I got home, at some point around midnight, I found that I was ill prepared to keep such a magnificent specimen. But I was energetic, enthused, and supercharged by teenage herp geek piss and vinegar. Out to the backyard I went, grabbed my six-foot-diameter plastic wading pool, which at times was used to keep turtles. I half rolled, half carried the bulky thing down the steps leading to our basement, and hooked a right turn into the furnace room, which was partitioned from the rest of our basement. Next, I went back up the steps and out into the backyard again, where I grabbed a 50-foot length of garden hose. On the wall opposite the furnace room stood our washer, dryer, and a deep sink, resplendent with a spigot threaded to accept said hose. The hose adapter was affixed to the spigot with but maximum fumbling, and the water turned on. The pool was filled halfway up with water; the gator was removed from the sack and plopped into the drink.

For the next 20 seconds or so, the view of this alligator was so spectacular that my heart nearly exploded with pure ecstasy. There he lay sprawled out in the crystal clear water of my pink wading pool, his blackish olive drab base coloration crisscrossed with bright orange narrow banding. His eyes were like that of a cat in the dark, shining, glowing, menacing and yet magnificent and awesome to behold. I lost myself in the velvety blackness of those beautiful vertical pupils. His broad head was the size of my hand, and the rows of white, rapier-sharp sharklike teeth glittered in his wide alligator jowls. And he was *mine*!

And then, with a sudden lunge, he was out of that pool, and scrambling willy-nilly with blazing speed towards the stacks of boxes of household junk that all Illinois basement furnace rooms seem to communally collect. Within the framework of these boxes was the perfect narrow gator sized opening that led into the deepest maw of the cardboard canyon in front of his chosen escape route. Effortlessly, he jetted into this, and disappeared from sight. Shit! What to do? My first impulse was to shut the door to the furnace room, and just leave him there until the morning, when I could deal with him man-to-man at my leisure. But no, I had to go and overthink the situation, and lose the advantage of an otherwise brilliant decision.

Instead, I began frantically moving box after box, and restacking them at variously oblique angles to their moorings. Eventually, I found that I had a straight shot down on top of that gator, a mere arm’s length away. I snatched the cloth sack that had been his previous residence from the floor, and stuffed my

arm inside. Without thinking of the possible ramifications of an inept grab, I thrust my arm downward, luckily snagged that rascal by the throat, and inverted said sack. Everything was under control again. The bag was deftly knotted, and up the steps I went again, giving pause for long enough to grab some tin snips from our family toolbox before doing so.

Around the perimeter of our recently planted and prolifically sprouting garden stood a chicken wire fence, roughly three feet tall, carefully and immaculately festooned to eight stakes made of rebar driven into the ground. This had been painstakingly done to discourage the ravenous packs of resident rabbits and groundhogs from devouring the proceeds of my mother’s toiling in the soil. It took me all of 30 seconds to hack my way through that anti-vermin barrier, and wrap roughly 50 feet of chicken wire around my arm. Back down the steps I went, and with the addition of some bailing wire, I completely encapsulated the wading pool with a tapestry of chicken wire, leaving just enough of an opening to shove the gator back into the watery confines within. Into that opening the gator was thrust. There were a few more additions of deftly twisted bailing wire to seal the opening, and off to bed I went. It was one hell of a night, even for a supercharged teenaged herp geek with a new and fabulous acquisition. If I would have just remembered to shut the door to the furnace room before crashing, the following morning might have gone a little smoother.

How does that Willie Nelson song go? “Mothers, don’t let your babies grow up to be herpers?” Well, that’s how it *should* go, anyhow. Normally, ma was a light sleeper. If a fly farted in our house in the dead of night, she was up investigating the source of the disturbance. Somehow, and some way, she slept through the tumultuous flandickery that had transpired the night before. She remained out cold through all the traipsing up and down the stairs, the running water, the unstacking and subsequent restacking of boxes, the cursing, the nocturnal raid on her garden fencing—she was oblivious to all it. On the other hand, dad slept soundly through everything that went on in the household. When at home, he was often sleeping, even when he was wide awake. He worked 14-hour days managing his toy and hobby store. But he was an early riser. He always had breakfast and was out the door by 6 A.M. Following dad’s egress, the next chore in ma’s routine was to do a load of laundry.

Thus it came to pass that the morning after, I heard my mom’s footsteps slowly clomping down the stairs that led into the basement. Her footwork was slow and measured, the kind of footsteps that somebody who was burdened with something heavy in their arms—like a laundry basket full of clothing—might make. Clomp, pause, clomp, pause, clomp. By the third clomp, my sleepy-headed mind began working furiously, for I knew that I should be telling her something. Clomp, pause, clomp, pause. But the lack of sleep would not allow my dim-witted brain to function enough to say anything. Clomp, pause. I started to drift back off back to sleep, clomp, pause, clomp . . . z-z-z-z-z-z, snore.

And then came the sound of an explosive hiss, followed by a blood curdling scream. There next was a loud thud—the kind of noise that 30 pounds of full laundry basket hitting the floor with great velocity might make. And then, I heard my name loudly

announced in vain, followed by footsteps rapidly charging back up the stairs. *Now* I was awake! And I knew that ma was coming to hand me my head.

My new pet had figured out a way to blast through the chicken wire enclosure. He had slithered out the open door to the furnace room, and set up camp in front of the washing machine. Poor ma had been witlessly heading down to do the laundry, fat, dumb and happy, and was greeted by a demon-possessed cat-eyed creature that took an instant dislike to her. It opened its snappers and hissed loudly at her—a fine good morning howdy-do from an animal that had never drawn a tame breath in its entire life. Ma’s reaction was quick. She hurled the basket and all of its contents at that gator, scoring a direct hit in the process. No doubt that the gator learned a little civility in the process. And now the same force that met my demonlike pet was coming for me!

I sprang out of bed, and locked the door to my room. I then began to slide the bed toward the door, in hopes of barricading myself in. But ma was too quick for that. She didn’t even bother with the doorknob, she just kicked that door open. Blam! I kept the bed between her and me, ready to run around it, or dive under it if she came after me. The game was now to just stay out her reach if I could. But no, the events of the morning, coupled with a wind sprint up the stairs and an adrenaline-packed kick to the door, had worn her out. She stood there panting, her visage was ashen, her hair all askew, rivulets of perspiration flowing from her forehead and down her cheeks, and she was trembling from an all out case of the heebie-jeebies. She was the epitome of a shell-shocked herper’s mother. She visibly calmed herself, and after couple of more twitches, managed to breathlessly announce: “That *thing* in the basement has *got* to go!”

My remonstrations were powerful, but I was up against an angry mom. I knew that she was really upset when she kept moving her feet every time I tried to kiss them. All of my begging and pleading led her to be convinced to just give Mr. Gator one more look. She would surely see the beauty of the creature—it had only given her a fright because she had not expected it. Down the stairs we went, and arrived just in time to see that Mr. Gator had begun to devour mom’s favorite nightgown. The fact that he laid stinky, greasy, fish-infested zinger on one of her dresses did not help matters any. But the final kabong came when we entered the furnace room. Ma’s eyes narrowed into little slits as she inquired “Where did you get that chicken wire?” Oops!

I never got the chance to answer, as ma went tearing up the steps, heading for the garden at full throttle. There was no need for such haste on her part. By the time that dad had finished his breakfast that fateful morning, so had every other manner of herbivorous vermin in the neighborhood. Once it was noted that the fence was down, the stampede of ravenous, turnip-eating hair balls must have been impressive. Not a morsel was left behind. Ma’s garden was a barren patch of ground, with nothing but rabbit turds and piles of groundhog scat scattered about. There next ensued a fearsome, albeit one sided, discussion that was remarkable in both content and duration. The gist of it all was as follows: “That *thing* in the basement had to go.”

With a heavy heart, I bagged Mr. Gator up, giving pause for long enough to extract ma’s shredded nightgown from his gullet during the process. Off I went to find the Devil, so that I could return his gator to him. The Devil is remarkably easy to find if one seeks him. It so happened that he was attending Crystal Lake Community High School at the time, and I met him at his locker. “Here, Mr. Devil,” said I, “take your *bastard* of a gator back. My mother won’t let me keep him.” He graciously took his basta, er uh, gator back, and even displayed some sympathy for the herper.

Well, shoot. There are so many more tales from my early associations with the CHS and teenaged herp geekdom to relay. But we see that we have about reached the word limit of our column for this month. My 50th anniversary of joining the CHS comes up in January of 2017. Perhaps then, I will discuss my prize-winning pet bullfrog “Luigee,” who single-handedly nearly caused a heart attack for an elderly woman who witlessly wandered past a CHS-sponsored event in a shopping mall. There was Tommy the Tegu, who once ripped a monstrous and murderous hamster in half before an astonished group of neighborhood kids. And the biggest crowd pleaser of all was a box turtle that we aptly named “Gut.” Before several witnesses, Gut managed to devour a two foot long dead blacksnake, all in one sitting. She started at the head, and choked that poor snake down like it was a strand of spaghetti. Case-hardened herpers were known to puke when it came to feeding time at the Repp zoo. And I have the CHS to thank for this.

This here is Roger Repp, signing off from Southern Arizona, where the turtles are strong, the snakes are handsome, and the lizards are all above average. To quote a famous *CHS Bulletin* columnist, Gary Kostka, “Thank you for your indulgence.”

Herpetology 2016

In this column the editorial staff presents short abstracts of herpetological articles we have found of interest. This is not an attempt to summarize all of the research papers being published; it is an attempt to increase the reader's awareness of what herpetologists have been doing and publishing. The editor assumes full responsibility for any errors or misleading statements.

TERRESTRIAL HABITAT USE BY POND TURTLES

G. Zaragoza et al. [2015, Journal of Herpetology 49(3):437-441] note that western pond turtles (*Actinemys marmorata*) are endemic to western North America and are found in a diversity of aquatic habitats. To date, few studies have examined the ecology of populations in ephemeral or intermittent ponds. Terrestrial habitat requirements of western pond turtles were studied in an intermittent pond that dries in years with below-average rainfall. The authors tracked terrestrial movements of western pond turtles in an ephemeral pond at the San Joaquin Experimental Range in Madera County, California, in the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada. They used radiotelemetry in 2012–13 to record their terrestrial locations and timing of departure from, and return to, the pond. Also, they examined the terrestrial microhabitat turtles selected for aestivation and overwintering. Turtles began leaving the pond as it dried in the late spring and early summer, spending an average of 235 d out of water, and their return to the pond was correlated with increasing rainfall during late winter. The majority of terrestrial locations were concealed completely in litter or duff and 95% of terrestrial locations during the study occurred within 187 m of the pond edge. Turtles in this study generally exhibited terrestrial habitat use similar to that of populations in intermittent lotic systems such as the many snow-melt and rain-fed rivers in northern California. These results reinforce the importance of terrestrial habitat in the life history of western pond turtles and the context-dependence of their habitat needs.

CRAWFISH FROG CALLING BEHAVIOR

N. J. Engbrecht et al. [2015, Copeia 103(4):1048-1057] note that the breeding calls of frogs and toads serve to attract females and advertise the fitness attributes of individual males, but male frogs will also call outside the breeding season. This study documents non-reproductive (upland) calling in crawfish frogs (*Lithobates areolatus*), a species of conservation concern. Adults are obligate crayfish burrow dwellers and generally live in isolation. The authors document post-breeding upland call characteristics and identify peak upland seasonal calling times. They show that crawfish frog upland and breeding call spectral and temporal structures differ, suggesting these calls serve different functions. They also show that the transition between these distinct call types can occur within a relatively short time, 120 min, as crawfish frog males leave their burrows to begin breeding migrations. Upland calling rates increase as the summer progresses and males call in response to specific stimuli — results consistent with a burrow defense hypothesis. Further, 28 (51%) of the 55 upland calling bouts recorded were associated with human-generated triggers, including the sounds of airplanes and automobiles, a finding confirmed using playback experiments. Calling in response to noise pollution can increase exposure to predators, and the authors discuss the conservation implications of this action for this imperiled species.

DIAMONDBACKS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

J. M. Fill et al. [2015, Journal of Herpetology 49(4):570-573] note that phenology is an important dimension of vertebrate reproductive strategies. Characterizing a species' reproductive phenology is a fundamental step in directing studies of influences on reproduction within and among populations throughout its range. Eastern diamond-backed rattlesnakes (*Crotalus adamanteus*: EDBs) are endemic predators of the imperiled longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) ecosystem of the southeastern United States, and the species currently is under review for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Conservation and management of this imperiled species will greatly benefit from research on its basic biology, and particularly from information that will assist management for adult survival and population viability. This paper presents long-term data on EDB breeding and reproductive phenology from several populations in the South Carolina Coastal Plain. The authors summarize the phenology of EDB breeding and reproduction using observations of free-ranging, radiotelemetered rattlesnakes in South Carolina from 1997 to 2011. Breeding activity occurred from 10 July to 14 October, with a mean of 28 August. There was one outlying observation of spring breeding (18 March). Females moved to birthing sites as early as 26 June and as late as 28 August, with a mean of 15 August. Neonates were born around 31 August, with birth dates between 10 August and 14 September. Also noted are six unique observations of apparent clutch size: 8, 10, 11, 11, 12, and 13 neonates. This information will contribute both to current knowledge and conservation efforts of EDBs, and also facilitate future long-term comparative investigations throughout their geographic range.

BD INFECTION AND TADPOLE FEEDING

J. A. DeMarchi et al. [2015, Journal of Herpetology 49(3): 395-398] note that parasitized hosts frequently experience behavioral side effects associated with pathology. Although this phenomenon is fairly well documented, the relationships between changes in host behavior and parasite infection intensity are not fully understood. Building upon previous research on *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (hereafter “Bd”) and feeding efficiency in anuran tadpoles, the authors conducted a laboratory experiment using Bd-infected tadpoles of the green frog (*Lithobates* [= *Rana*] *clamitans*). They allowed tadpoles to feed during a 5-h trial and tested whether Bd-infection intensity was a significant predictor of the amount of food that tadpoles consumed during the trial. As predicted, tadpole feeding efficiency decreased linearly with Bd-infection intensity. The results indicate that Bd-infected tadpoles suffer a reduced potential to obtain food and that feeding performance is correlated with Bd-infection intensity. If tadpoles cannot clear low-level Bd infections, their health might decline at a rapid rate, which could further reduce their ability to defend themselves from other micro- and macroparasites.

FORAGING IN NORTHERN PACIFIC RATTLESNAKES

B. J. Putman et al. [2016, *Herpetologica* 72(1):55-63] note that foraging is a key aspect of a species' ecology and decisions made while foraging affect fitness in many ways. Although much research has focused on snake foraging, only a handful of detailed studies have been conducted on free-ranging individuals, all on *Crotalus horridus*. The authors used fixed videography to collect data on free-ranging northern Pacific rattlesnake (*Crotalus oreganus*) behavior to qualitatively test predictions regarding interspecific differences in rattlesnake foraging behavior. They analyzed foraging behaviors based on encounter rates with prey and strike rates on prey, distances moved between consecutive ambush sites, residency time at each site, and poststrike behaviors. Snakes encountered approximately 4 prey/d, with California ground squirrels (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*) being encountered at much higher rates than other prey types. *Crotalus oreganus* typically did not remain at hunting sites for long durations compared with other species, and generally exhibited short distance movements (<10 m) to new sites. Snakes initiated strikes during 21% of all prey encounters, and 49% of these strikes were successful. Snakes were more likely to hold on to nonsquirrel prey than squirrels after a strike. When snakes struck and released prey, the distance prey fled after a strike was positively related to the time snakes spent locating the envenomated prey. These findings indicate that variation in rattlesnake foraging behavior both within and between species might be driven largely by differences in habitat features, including prey abundance.

SPOTTED TURTLES IN GEORGIA

D. J. Stevenson et al. [2015, *Chelonian Conservation and Biology* 14(2):136-142] report that conservation of the imperiled spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*) at the regional level (i.e., Georgia, USA) will require knowledge of the species historic and contemporary distribution, activity patterns, and habitat preferences. To address these needs, they compiled 170 records of spotted turtles in Georgia from 1892 to 2014, including 89 museum records, 80 records based on credible observations or photos, and 1 literature record. There are recent (1995–2014) records for 79 locations in 31 counties, with 29 of these occurring on 14 conservation lands. Results demonstrate that the spotted turtle ranges throughout much of the Coastal Plain of Georgia including the Flint River and Withlacoochee River drainages of the Gulf Coastal Plain. Half of the records for which habitat could be classified (62 of 124 records, 50%) were associated with blackwater creek swamps or seepage slope swamps. Remarkably, all but 4 Georgia spotted turtle records with body size data (i.e., 150 of 154; 97%) were based on adult turtles. The majority of Georgia records with the date included were from the late winter–spring (134 of 160 records, 84%, February–May). Likewise, the majority of observations were turtles found on roads (94 of 170 records; 55%), the majority of which (63; 67%) were alive. For the spotted turtle in Georgia, the authors recommend 1) continued protection and state-listing status, and 2) initiating long-term mark–recapture efforts to estimate population sizes and demographics and evaluate population trends.

POND TURTLES ON THE KINMEN ISLANDS

S.-M. Lin et al. [2015, *Journal of Herpetology* 49(3):399-404] point out that demilitarized zones may aid in the protection of endangered wildlife. They compared relative abundance of the endangered Chinese pond turtle (*Mauremys reevesii*) among water bodies on the Kinmen Islands, a recently demilitarized zone between Taiwan and China. Vegetation and wildlife on the two islands, located 2 km from the Chinese coastline, were degraded by bombardment and military occupation between 1958 and early 2000s. However, natural habitats gradually recovered after military forces withdrew. More than 100 ponds, mostly produced during the occupation to provide freshwater for the soldiers, are now abandoned and provide habitat for aquatic turtles. The authors sampled 41 ponds and found that presence of *M. reevesii* was tightly associated with vegetation coverage around the pond, whereas its relative abundance was associated with aquatic vegetation and distance from roads. Comprehensive protection and management of this species should consider both vegetation coverage and road effects in certain vulnerable areas where establishment of a natural reserve might be considered.

PLANT SELECTION BY A BROMELIAD FROG

M. M. Mageski et al. [2016, *Journal of Herpetology* 50(1):108-112] note that bromeliads are used by many frog species because of their capacity to accumulate rainwater. The bromeligenous frog, *Phyllodytes luteolus*, uses bromeliads for its entire life cycle including shelter, foraging and reproduction. This study evaluated the effect of plant morphometrics and the properties of water accumulated in bromeliads on the selection of these plants by *P. luteolus*. The authors sampled 103 bromeliads of which 41 were unoccupied and 62 were occupied by *P. luteolus*. Results suggest that bromeliad occupation by *P. luteolus* is nonrandom. Occupied plants were shorter in height, had a greater number of leaves, and had lower water conductivity than did unoccupied plants. Males were more likely than females to occupy plants with more leaves. Plant selection may be related to the reproductive success of *P. luteolus* because frogs using plants with more leaves and lower conductivity may experience reductions in competition for space, predator encounters and desiccation. Because illegal bromeliad harvesting threatens many bromeligenous frogs, improved understanding of bromeliad selection may determine which bromeliad species should be targeted for conservation to ensure the population viability of frogs.

SIGNS OF ORINOCO CROCODILE RECOVERY

L. F. Anzola and R. Antelo [2015, *The Herpetological Bulletin* (134):10-14] report that since the end of commercial hunting in the 1960s, there were no signs of recovery of the Orinoco crocodile (*Crocodylus intermedius*) populations throughout its range. In this study, nest counts have been used to establish population trends in the Arauca Department, Colombia. From December 2014 to April 2015, the authors surveyed 166.7 km of rivers for nests. Twenty-four nests were located, 2.2 times more than recorded 13 years previously. These results indicate that *C. intermedius* populations in the area are increasing. The awareness of local people, a reduction in fishing activities and use of the river for transport may explain the recovery.

Minutes of the CHS Board Meeting, March 18, 2016

President John Belah called the meeting to order at 7:55 P.M. Board members Aaron LaForge, Rich Lamszus, Brandon Ottolino and Mike Scott were absent.

Officers' Reports

Recording secretary: Teresa Savino read the minutes of the February board meeting, which were corrected for typos and to show that a motion had been passed to halt the adoptions program. The corrected minutes were accepted.

Treasurer: Amy Sullivan read the financial report. An error in the balance sheet was corrected. It was noted that the restricted adoptions fund has about \$7000 in it.

Vice-president: Jessica Wadleigh reported on the speakers she has scheduled for the next three general meetings.

Corresponding secretary: Amy Bochenko now has letterhead stationery and will be thanking past speakers.

Membership secretary: Mike Dloogatch read the list of memberships that had expired in January.

Sergeant-at-arms: Brandon Ottolino was not present. Estimated attendance at the February meeting was around 25.

Committee Reports

Shows:

- Notebaert Nature Museum, first full weekend of each month.
- Chicagoland Family Pet Expo, Arlington Park Racetrack, March 18–20.
- NARBC, Holiday Inn Convention Center, Tinley Park, March 19-20

ReptileFest, Northeastern Illinois University, April 9-10

Kids Expo, Holiday Inn Convention Center, Tinley Park, April 16-17.

Sheffield Garden Walk in July. Exact date TBD.

John Bellah was asked by the Notebaert Museum to have members available with animals to display one night a week during the summer when the museum is open until 8 P.M. All dates are Thursdays. Dick Buchholz is available for most. Other members will need to help out with remaining dates. Dick Buchholz was invited to Raging Waters water park to dedicate a new water slide. The event is in the summer. More details forthcoming.

Adoptions: Linda Malawy and Bob Bavirsha discussed the adoptions program. Both disagreed with the decision to halt adoptions. They are continuing to work with adoptions and willing to continue in that capacity. There was discussion of how to manage the adoptions fund. The fund has money that is not being spent. It was decided that Linda and Bob should be

reimbursed for expenses. John Archer moved to reinstate the adoptions program. The motion passed unanimously.

Junior herpers: The topic at the March meeting was native frogs. Attendance was about 50. The museum provided the animals. April topic will be reptile reproduction. Colleen reported that a church in Chicago is having a festival July 9-10, and have asked that the CHS and Jr. Herpers be there. Colleen is thinking of doing a conservation project. She asked for assistance. Ages 8 and up will be the target group. Jessica Wadleigh will help her.

Library: Bob Bavirsha suggested bringing older books to the Midwest Symposium to give away or auction off. Several people will review the collection to decide which books to cull.

Old Business

ReptileFest: John Archer reported that online registration is up and running. Not many people have signed up so far and more exhibitors are needed. Many high school students will be there as volunteers. Advertising is happening. We need Square readers to be available at the admission door. Teresa gave hers to John Bellah. Bob B. requested a thank-you letter to be given to Sam's Club upfront for the loan of carts that are used every year for loading. There is a new person handling carts at Sam's Club. Amy B. will provide the letter.

Midwest Symposium: We will be hosting the event this year at the Hilton Lisle/Naperville, September 30 – October 2. John Bellah has about 8 names in mind for speakers. He also has someone in mind to be the auctioneer. It was suggested that the CHS sponsor attendance for a young person, aged 12–17, and parents.

Storage: Bob B. needs the CHS items that are in his storage to be moved prior to ReptileFest. John Archer will rent a 10 × 10 Unit for the CHS at the facility where we are already renting space for our trailer.

New Business

General meetings: John discussed some ideas to increase attendance at the general meetings. Various ideas were discussed, including moving the meeting night. This might be difficult due to the number of events the Notebaert holds on weekends. John also suggested getting a camera to record the speaker and post on social media.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by recording secretary Teresa Savino

Advertisements

For sale: **highest quality frozen rodents.** I have been raising rodents for over 30 years and can supply you with the highest quality mice available in the U.S. These are always exceptionally clean and healthy with no urine odor or mixed in bedding. I feed these to my own reptile collection exclusively and so make sure they are the best available. All rodents are produced from my personal breeding colony and are fed exceptional high protein, low fat rodent diets; no dog food is ever used. Additionally, all mice are flash frozen and are separate in the bag, not frozen together. I also have ultra low shipping prices to most areas of the U.S. and can beat others shipping prices considerably. I specialize in the smaller mice sizes and currently have the following four sizes available: Small pink mice (1 day old—1 gm) , \$25 /100; Large pink mice (4 to 5 days old—2 to 3 gm), \$27.50 /100; Small fuzzy mice (7 to 8 days old—5 to 6 gm) , \$30/100; Large fuzzy mice /hoppers (10 to 12 days old—8 to 10 gm), \$35/100 Contact Kelly Haller at 785-234-3358 or by e-mail at kelhal56@hotmail.com

For sale: 25 large, heavy-duty, open-top white plastic tubs, most with installed drains, perfect for aquatic/semi-aquatic turtles, small lizards, etc. Segments of PVC drain pipe fitted to tubs can be included with purchase. Each tub is approximately 36 inches by 66 inches, and approximately 12 inches in depth. All are gently used and in great shape. Asking \$75 each, \$65 each for 2 or more. Pick-up only from Kenosha, Wisconsin, area. Contact Jim or Kirsten at (262) 331-3423.

For sale: Standard 24" Neodesha reptile cages, 3 × 6" vent on top, tempered glass front. Like new condition, no burns or stains, original glass. These cages do not have the dam (horizontal molding that crosses the entire front width of the cage, used to hold back bedding material)—easier to clean without the dam. About 20 currently available, \$45 each. Linda Malawy, (630) 717-9955, linda_malawy@hotmail.com.

Herp tours: **Costa Rica herping adventures.** Join a small group of fellow herpers for 7 herp-filled days. We find all types of herps, mammals, birds and insects, but our target is snakes. We average 52 per trip, and this is our 10th year doing it. If you would like to enjoy finding herps in the wild and sleep in a bed at night with air-conditioning, hot water and only unpack your suitcase once, instead of daily, then this is the place to do it. Go to our web-site <http://hiss-n-things.com> and read the highlights of our trips. Read the statistics of each trip and visit the link showing photos of the 40 different species we have found along the way. E-mail at jim.kavney@gmail.com or call Jim Kavney, 305-664-2881.

Line ads in this publication are run free for CHS members — \$2 per line for nonmembers. Any ad may be refused at the discretion of the Editor. Submit ads to mdloogatch@chicagoherp.org.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Chicago Herpetological Society will be held at 7:30 P.M., Wednesday, May 25, at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Cannon Drive and Fullerton Parkway, in Chicago. **Chip Cochran**, a Ph.D. candidate at Loma Linda University, will speak about “Project Pondo: A Chameleon Conservation Effort.” This is an effort undertaken by Herpetological Conservation International (HCI), a nonprofit organization founded in 2015 dedicated to conserving imperiled reptile and amphibian species. The first conservation project HCI has undertaken is the creation of a reserve for the endangered Pondo Dwarf Chameleon (*Bradypodion caffer*). Time permitting, Chip will also provide an update on his Ph.D. thesis, a study investigating geographic venom variation in the southwestern speckled rattlesnake (*Crotalus pyrrhus*), a project CHS helped fund.

The June 29 meeting will be our popular and always well-attended annual **Show & Tell** meeting. Bring an animal that you find interesting for one reason or another and be prepared to give a short (under five minutes) presentation to the group. Don’t be shy. Neither age (yours) nor commonness (the animal’s) should be a limitation.

The regular monthly meetings of the Chicago Herpetological Society take place at Chicago’s newest museum—the **Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum**. This beautiful building is at Fullerton Parkway and Cannon Drive, directly across Fullerton from the Lincoln Park Zoo. Meetings are held the last Wednesday of each month, from 7:30 P.M. through 9:30 P.M. Parking is free on Cannon Drive. A plethora of CTA buses stop nearby.

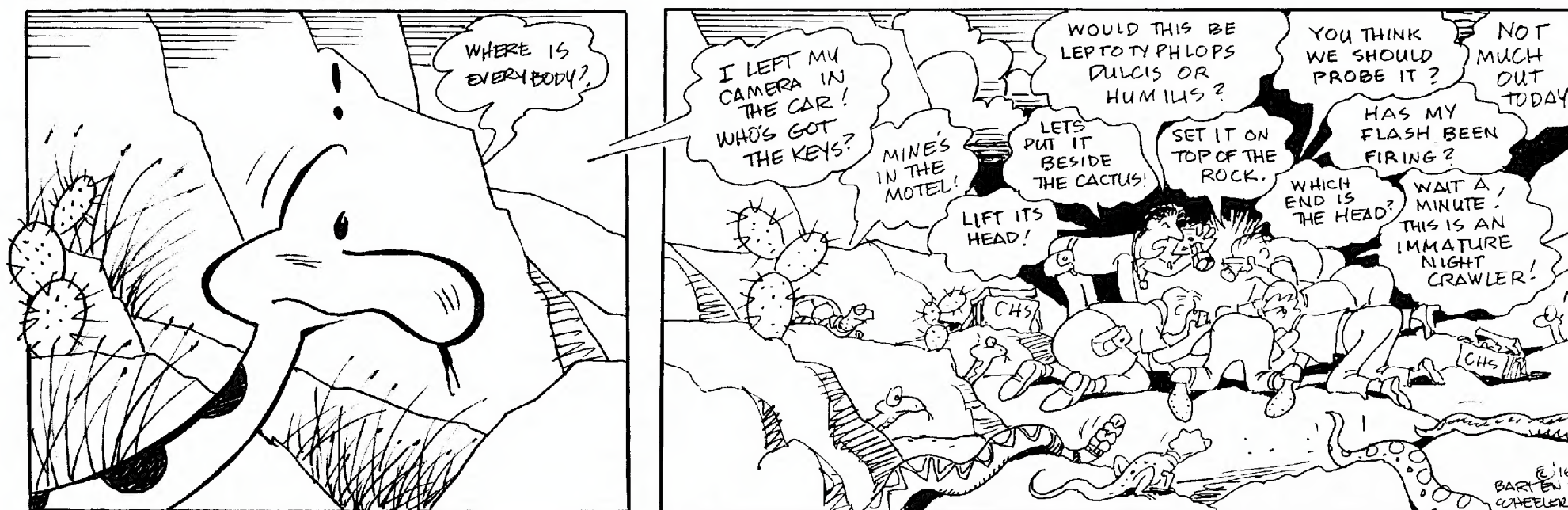
Board of Directors Meeting

Are you interested in how the decisions are made that determine how the Chicago Herpetological Society runs? And would you like to have input into those decisions? If so, mark your calendar for the next board meeting, to be held at 7:30 P.M., Friday, June 17, 2016, at the Schaumburg Township District Library, 130 S. Roselle Road, Schaumburg.

The Chicago Turtle Club

The monthly meetings of the Chicago Turtle Club are informal; questions, children and animals are welcome. Meetings normally take place at the North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 N. Pulaski, in Chicago. Parking is free. For more info visit the group’s Facebook page.

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